(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MUHI RAM SAIKIA): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

[English]

Vacant Posts in Educational Institutions

796. SHRI SATYA PAL JAIN: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the total sanctioned strength of teaching and non-teaching staff in various Government educational institutions of the Union Territory, Chandigarh;

(b) the number of posts lying vacant in those institutions and the duration thereof; and

(c) the time by which the vacant posts are likely to be filled up?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MUHI RAM SAIKIA): (a) and (b) As per the information furnished by Chandigarh Administration, the sanctioned strength of teaching and non-teaching staff in various educational institutions is 3235 and 723 respectively. Out of these, 186 teaching and 42 non-teaching posts are lying vacant from past 2 to 12 months as on 31.10.1997.

(c) They have further informed that many of the vacant posts could not be filled owing to Court cases. Action for filling the other vacancies has already been initiated.

[Translation]

Wild Animals in JIM Corbett National Park

797. SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT 'BACHDA': Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware that due to improper upkeep of wild animals in the Jim Corbett National Park, some animals, like Tiger and Bears run away from the park and become man eaters;

(b) if so, the number of persons/animals attacked by such animals in Uttaranchal during the years 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97; and

(c) the preventive steps taken by the Government to check the recurrence of this menace?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

[English]

Ad-hoc Work Charged Employees

798. SHRI K.V. SURENDRA NATH: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether ad-hoc work charged employees are working in different Circle/Division of the Central Water Commission;

(b) whether they are entitled for regular pay scale;

(c) if so, whether they are entitled for annual increments and other service benefits and if so, the details in this regard;

(d) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(e) whether ad-hoc service of such employees is reckoned at the time of their regularisation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI SIS RAM OLA): (a) Yes, Sir. They are called ad-hoc khalasis.

(b) They are paid at the minimum of the scale of pay in the lowest grade in the workcharged establishment.

(c) They are entitled to the benefits of increments and other service benefits only after they acquire temporary status under the "Casual Labourers (Grant of Temporary Status and Regularisation) scheme of Government of India, 1993"

(d) Does not arise.

(e) 50% of the service rendered by the ad-hoc khalasis under temporary status is counted for the purpose of retirement benefits after their regularisation as per the said scheme. Besides, for regularisation, an ad-hoc khalasi is also allowed age relaxation to the extent of continuous service rendered by him as ad-hoc khalasi.

[Translation]

Double Fare Policy for International Tourists

799. SHRI ANAND RATNA MAURYA: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have a proposal to abolish the double fare policy introduced for the international tourists in tourism sector;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which the said system is likely to be abolished?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI SRIKANTA JENA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

[English]

Lower Phone Rates

800. SHRI G.L. KANAUJIA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Government has been

drawn to the news item captioned "US may force India to lower phone rates" appearing in the Hindustan Times dated November 11, 1997;

(b) if so, the facts of the matter reported therein; and

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) Yes, Sir. A news item captioned 'US may force India to lower phone rates' appeared in the Hindustan Times dated November 10, 1997.

(b) Briefly, the facts of the matter are as follows:

As per agreement between the Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited, India's international carrier, and US carriers, the settlement rate for international telephone traffic between India and USA was $0.79 per paid minute till 31.3.1997.

Federal Communications Commission, USA, vide its order dated 7.8.1997 has made it mandatory for US carriers to follow certain settlement rate guidelines from January 1, 1998 which interalia envisage lowering the settlement rate for US/India calls to 23 cents per paid minute by the year 2002. Accordingly, the US carriers are asking Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited to reduce settlement rates as per the Federal Communications Commission's order.

(c) Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited have filed an appeal against the order in US courts, along with international carriers of several other Countries. The appeal has been admitted.

Conversion of State Highways into National Highways

801. SHRI K. KANDASAMY: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to convert some State Highways into National Highways;

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise; and

(c) the amount likely to be incurred thereon state-wise?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATARAMAN): (a) to (c) The proposals are at preliminary stage and it is too early to give details.

Use of Wireless Communication Channels

802. SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to make the Department of telecommunications (DOT). Doordarshan, All India Radio and other public users of radio spectrum to pay for the use of wireless communications channels;

(b) if so, whether the Ministry of Finance are in favour of charging Government users along the same liners as cellular operators; and

(c) if so, the time by which a final decision is likely to be taken in the matter and the rates envisaged for use of radio channels?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) and (b) There is no proposal to charge the Central Government departments for use of radio frequency spectrum along the same lines as cellular operators.

(c) Does not arise.

Polaravaram Project

803. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

SHRIMATI LAKSHMI PANABAKA:

Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether an All-party delegation of MPs of Andhra Pradesh met the Prime Minister and urged him to take up the Polaravaram Project as a National Project;

(b) if so, whether the delegation observed that Polaravarm Project would benefit the agricultural needs of the people of East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna, Visakhapatnam and some parts of Vijayanagaram district; and

(c) if so, the time by which a decision is likely to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI SIS RAM OLA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) At present, the project is to be constructed by the State Government for which an amount of Rs. 25.00 crores is provided in the IXth Plan.

Tapping of Ground Water

804. SHRI KESHAB MAHANTA: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether a conference of State Ministers for Water Resources was held in August, 1997 to discuss the draft bill of the Union Government to regulate the tapping of ground water;

(b) if so, the outcome thereof;

(c) whether the water level in most of the States have drastically sunk over the years; and

(d) if so, the fall, in ground level, registered during the last five years, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI SIS RAM OLA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Question does not arise.

(c) Long term observations made by the Central Ground Water Board have shown a state of both rise and fall in the level of ground water in various states.

(d) Details of fall in the level of ground water registered during the last five years (1992-93 to 1996-97) is given in the enclosed statement.